

The story of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal and the Blacksmith

Islamic Stories - Volume 1

Written by Mansoor Ali Shah

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Chapter 1: The Reverence for Divine Call

Daily Struggles: A Blacksmith's Labour

In front of the residence of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (may Allah have mercy upon him), there once lived a blacksmith. Burdened with the responsibility of a large family, he remained occupied in his work throughout the day. His livelihood depended on constant labour, yet his spiritual discipline never waned.

The Test of Obedience: Response to the Call to Prayer

It was his daily habit that, if he had raised his hammer into the air to strike hot iron and the call to prayer (adhān) was heard at that very moment, he would not let the hammer fall upon the iron. Instead, he would gently place it upon the ground and proclaim:

Blacksmith:

"Now a summons has come to me from my Lord. I shall first perform the prayer and then return to my work."

This habitual reverence marked his character until his final breath.

A Dream After Death: Divine Generosity

Following his passing, he appeared in a dream to someone. The dreamer asked him, “What was your outcome?”

Blacksmith:

"I have been granted a station just beneath Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal."

The person, surprised by this rank, inquired further:

Dreamer:

"But your knowledge and deeds were not as vast as his—how did you attain such nearness?"

To this, the blacksmith replied:

Blacksmith:

"I used to show reverence for the Name of Allāh. As soon as I would hear the call to prayer, I would halt my work and perform my prayer. Due to this respect, Allāh, the Lord of Might and Majesty, bestowed His mercy upon me."